

**COLVIN RUN MILL HISTORIC SITE**  
**GRIST FROM THE MILL FOR OUR VOLUNTEERS**  
**November 2003**



### **Thanks**

Thanks to all the volunteers who made cider, shelled corn, fired up the still, and gave tours at Autumn Traditions; stuffed straw into stretchy pantyhose at Scarecrow Making; and made s'mores and cider at our Halloween bash.

People joked with the moonshiner, laughed at the cockeyed scarecrows, and clapped at the triumphs of the storyteller's heroes. At Colvin Run Mill, volunteers worked hard to make October a terrific month. We appreciate it, as we are sure all our visitors did.



### **Birthday Celebration**

Sunday, October 19 was Jim Hogan's birthday. Since his son, daughter-in-law and granddaughter are in town, between foreign assignments for the State Department, his loving wife Karen planned a Sunday brunch celebration at Landsdowne Resort. But when she told Jim of her plans, the birthday boy said No! He had other ideas and wouldn't have time for a leisurely meal. The mill's Autumn Traditions program would be that day and he (and she, too) had to report for volunteer duty at 11:30 sharp! So both Hogans appeared right on schedule -- Jim to man the still and Karen to work the gate -- having passed up a sumptuous brunch at Landsdowne in favor of a quick breakfast at IHOP followed by diligent volunteer duty.



### **Sad News**

We were shocked and saddened to learn that Bob Davis had a heart attack and died on October 10. He and his wife Genie were in New England on their way to Acadia National Park -- Bob's goal was to get a stamp from every National Park -- when he collapsed in the car. He was taken to a local hospital in Lowell MA, and died a couple of days later.

Bob, a retired engineer, began volunteering in 1996 and enjoyed explaining the milling system to visitors, but we were surprised when he became interested in ice cream making. He took to it like a duck to water, setting up the equipment and keeping the program running smoothly. Mostly, though, he enjoyed the delight of children (and adults) at the magic of cream and sugar being turned into ice cream. He never tired (even after a 12-batch day) of slowly removing the lid of the ice cream maker to oohs and aahs as everyone crowded around for the first peek of the finished product. Sometimes, Bob seemed as amazed as the visitors.

Giving a tour, making ice cream, on the ski slopes, or searching for the next National Park, Bob never lost his sense of wonder and joy at the world. We will surely miss our Ice Cream King.

## **Congratulations**

Bob Lundegard has done it again! On November 21, Fairfax County Park Authority will present him with an Elly Doyle Park Service Award in recognition of his many contributions to Colvin Run Mill Historic Site. A founding member and the treasurer of the Friends of Colvin Run Mill, Bob digitized and catalogued Currie's slides of the 1968 mill restoration. Bob also produced a digital record of the latest restoration of the flume and waterwheel with the resultant slide show now a part of the Colvin Run Mill web site. He then prepared a power point presentation for the annual volunteer dinner to enhance the volunteers' experience of the restoration. We're happy to see Bob's archival efforts recognized by the Fairfax County Park Authority.



## **Back to School**

In September, Colvin Run Elementary School opened on Trap Road – right in Mike Moran's neighborhood. When the school announced an AutumnFEST, Mike envisioned an opportunity to acquaint students, families and faculty with the *other* Colvin Run facility – our historic site.

On Saturday, November 8 from 2 to 5pm, paid and volunteer staff will host a hands-on exhibit with corn muffins activities, and 2-for-1 passes to Colvin Run Mill Historic Site. If you would like to help or just visit the state-of-the-art school, Mary and Ann have more information.



## **Here Before You Know It**

It's November and we are already envisioning the site festooned with evergreens. Please look at your trees and shrubs with pruning in mind. We will take all those shorn branches and even small trees to transform them into decorations on Tuesday, December 2. Please let Mary know before December if you can contribute to the greening of Colvin Run Mill Historic Site. If you would like to play Martha Stewart, we invite you to help create swags and kissing balls on December 2.

Children's Holiday Shopping, the most volunteer-intensive event of the year, is the first weekend in December — the 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup>. If you know anyone who would like to help children select gifts or wrap presents, we can use lots of willing hands.

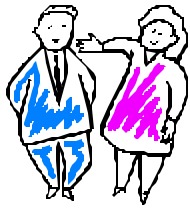


## Gold Medal Winner

We are gold medal winners! We know that our volunteers deserve gold medals and now Mary Allen has a “gold medal” pin for each of our volunteers.

In October 2002, the National Sporting Good’s Association’s Sports Foundation named the Fairfax County Park Authority a Gold Medal Award winner, a prestigious recognition of the excellence of the Park Authority’s accomplishments in the world of parks and recreation.

In appreciation of the work of the front-line people who contributed to this achievement, Mike Kane, Director of the Park Authority has provided a “gold medal” for every volunteer.



## Welcome

Kathleen (Kitty) O’Hara recently retired as a deputy director of the procurement office at USAID, but she always meant to be a historian. She found the perfect melding of her two lives by volunteering in the general store on Wednesday. Kitty is no stranger to Colvin Run Mill; she was a touring docent in the early 1980s. We are so glad she decided to return.

Don Fowler is a neighbor who lives across Route 7 from Colvin Run Mill. His interest in history extends to teaching the “Care and Feeding of Antique Clocks” and he even restored a 19<sup>th</sup> century timepiece for an Indiana college museum. I’m sure it must be our BIG gears that whetted his interest. After all, you don’t need a magnifying glass to fix the mill gears.

Fred Pretty is our new maintenance assistant, working Sunday through Thursday with Mason. Fred was born and raised on a farm in North Carolina, but has lived in Fairfax County for ten years. He likes the similarities of working at the mill and working on a farm, with jobs ranging from machinery repair to chasing flour dust to keeping vegetation under control. Fred’s real love though is art – he enjoys oil painting and drawing cartoons and dabbles in poetry.



## Farewell

When Charles Brunner retired and began his consulting business, he thought he would have lots of spare time. He began volunteering on Thursdays at Colvin Run Mill in 1997 because, as a mechanical engineer, he loved showing school children how the mill worked. Fortunately for him, but unfortunately for us, Charles’ consulting business has continued to grow and he spends more and more time on the road and cannot continue to volunteer at the mill. The Thursday group will miss him.



## AmeriCorps

AmeriCorps is a network of national service programs whose members – usually young adults -- work on various community-based projects throughout the year. We have been fortunate to host a team of seven AmeriCorps workers October 28 to 30.

The mud hole in the picnic area is disappearing now that AmeriCorps extended the drainage pipe from the picnic area to the holding pond area. They did it all by hand, the better to keep an eye out for any significant historic finds. Then they headed down the hill to the mill to work with Mason to terrace the hillside by the mill. It will be planted so that wild things don't creep back and take over the territory. The list of accomplishments goes on and you will be sure to see the improvements on your next day at the mill.

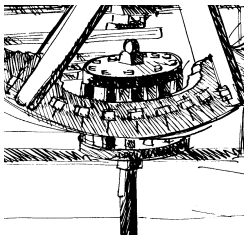


## Mabry Mill

by Muriel Levin

About 50 miles south of Roanoke at milepost 176 on the beautiful Skyline Drive sits picturesque Mabry Mill. Built in 1910 by Ed Mabry, this small weathered wooden mill functioned as a sawmill, gristmill, and woodworking shop. The versatile Mabry also served as the community blacksmith, providing a variety of services for the local families. Shoeing horses, forging tools and utensils, mending wagons and farm equipment, as well as dressing the stones and grinding grain were all in a day's work for Mabry. The site also contains a moonshine still and sheds and equipment for making sorghum and apple butter.

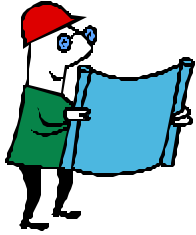
Two streams funnel water into an exceptionally long oak flume to power the overshot waterwheel. The two grinding stones of native granite came from a nearby quarry. Now operated by the U.S. Park Service, one stone is used for grinding corn for flour and grits, and the other stone is used to grind grain for cattle feed. In season, there are 10-minute tours on the weekend culminating in a grinding demonstration. All-in-all, this is a very pleasant spot to visit and get a glimpse of what life was like in a semi-isolated mountain community 100 years ago.



## From the Miller's Corner

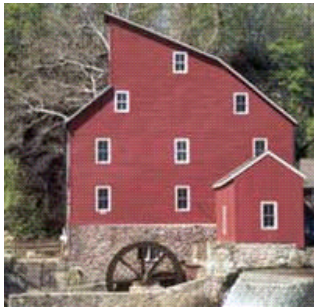
While grinding for visitors to the Autumn Traditions program, Mason noticed that the stones were not tentering properly (adjusting the distance between the stones). He then checked the foot bearing that sits in a plate on the bridge tree under the stone spindle and carries the weight of the runner stone. He found metal debris in the grease, indicating failure of the roller bearing.

Mason continued to grind for Autumn Traditions, monitoring the bearing for overheating or dangerous wobbles. Since late October is the normal end of the grinding season, Mason will have the winter months to replace the foot bearing during his full winter maintenance of the water-power system. Then he will have a fresh start of the grinding season in the spring.



### **Arti-Facts from Dawn**

Dawn has two major goals as the site collections manager. She wants to provide a collections plan, which the site has never had; and she wants to create a furnishing plan for the mill as part of the collections plan. Her enclosed article details some of the difficulties encountered on the path to her goals.

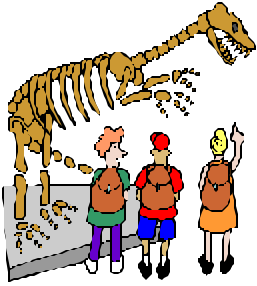


### **On the Road with Bob and Marge**

One of the mills on the Society for the Preservation of Old Mills (SPOOM) tour in September was the Red Mill in historic Clinton, NJ. Bob and Marge did some research and discovered lots of information about this beautiful mill on the Raritan River.

# Plan, Plan, Plan

By Dawn Kehrer



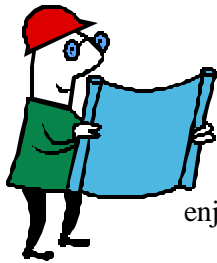
## Collections Plan

Museums collect things. That is a fact. How does the staff of a museum know when to say “yes” and when to say “no” to an item that at first glance appears to be perfect addition to the historic collections? When a wonderful example of a dinosaur bone is offered as a gift to the museum, how can the staff refuse, given the budget restraints of many institutions.

Is the piece relevant to the museum and does the museum need another example of this type? Is the piece worth the investment of time and money needed to preserve and maintain it? Is there room to store the item in a safe environment? If the decision is made to acquire the item, should it have hands-on use or only be exhibited? The answer to these difficult questions is found in a museum’s *collections plan*. This plan is a “blueprint for guiding the collection’s content; a way to discipline collecting efforts. Collections plans require a museum to reflect on its mission, its current collection as well as its goal for future exhibitions, programming and research in order to identify gaps between the real and the ideal collection.”

I have just begun to write a collections plan for Colvin Run Mill, with the guidance of Jeanne Niccolls, Collections Manager. The plan will help us to: manage our finite resources, reject offers of non-mission-related donations, ensure that the needs of the museum’s audience are met, and educate administrators about the needs of the collection.

As of 2001, for a museum to be accredited by the American Association of Museums, as Colvin Run Mill is, that museum must incorporate future collecting activities into institutional plans and policies. Before I write our plan, the staff will discuss our mission statement, our collections management policy, and our interpretive and long-range plans. We will also review the present collections on our site – we need to know what we have in order to know what we need. When the collections plan is completed, it will be our guiding light to pursuing future collections.



## Furnishings Plan

In conjunction with a collections plan, I am working on a furnishings plan for the mill which will be furnished in the 1810-1850 time period. As part of my research, I enjoyed visiting several mills during the recent SPOOM conference.

When I find a furnished miller’s office in my travels or inquiries, I must be sure that the furnishings are from the correct time period by validating the associated research. Information has been difficult to find. I have seen a number of photos of millers’ offices, but data that would let me know that the furnishings are accurate is always missing or incomplete.

To date, I have not been able to find a mill furnishings plan at any of the historic sites that I have contacted. Everyone expressed interest in the idea and many have asked for the final results of my research. I continue the hunt for defensible data with the hope that Colvin Run Mill’s furnishing plan may provide a model for many other historic mills.